

POINT OF REFERENCE

Volume 3, Number 1
Fall 1992

Elaine Gaber, Editor
Jan Perrier, Editorial Asst.

Regional News Capsules

REGION I Regional reference centers are now providing residents with on-site and telephone access to specialized resources in four priority subject areas: business (NWM), education, employment and career (PFP), health and medicine (SOM), and government and law (NNP).

REGION II The Newark Public Library was recently awarded a three year LSCA grant to establish a multilingual materials acquisition center for New Jersey libraries. The toll-free consultation hotline is (800) 645-0068.

REGION III An advanced business seminar will be held on October 23 at the Rutgers Newark Dana Library. Rutgers business librarians Roberta Tipton and Ka-Neng Au will discuss dealing with the business patron, writing a business plan, marketing research, company/financial research, international trade statistics, and foreign company research. To register, call (201) 673-6373.

REGION IV A plan for enhanced reference service is being implemented. The following specialized databases will be made available: IAC'S Health Reference Center(NNB), New York Times OnDisc (ELP), Disclit (NNK), The Columbia Granger's World of Poetry Disk (QYY) and Phonedisc U.S.A. (WRR).

REGION V A survey regarding the regional reference centers was published as a supplement to the summer newsletter and more than 18,500 completed questionnaires were analyzed. To request a copy, please call: (908) 409-6484.

REGION VI An ILL Mentor Library program has been established so ILL staff in member libraries may observe successful and well established interlibrary loan operations.

Note: due to limited space, most libraries were listed by OCLC symbol.

Preserving New Jersey's Newspaper Heritage

The ongoing New Jersey newspaper project, overseen by the New Jersey State Archives in cooperation with Rutgers University Libraries, is supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the New Jersey Historical Commission. In its first three years the project concentrated on microfilming newspapers between 1860 and 1950, and is currently microfilming papers dating from 1950 to the present. To date, the New Jersey Newspaper Project has filmed approximately 1.9 million pages of newspapers on 2,000 rolls of 35mm microfilm.

The project seeks to microfilm newspapers for repository libraries and requires that those libraries interested in participating, contribute approximately one-third of the production cost. In return, the New Jersey Newspaper Project will provide a complete set of the film product. Questions about archives microfilm sales should be directed to Daniel P. Jones, New Jersey State Archives, 185 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0307; (609) 984-3297

Changing Demographics: Numbers Without Numbness

Recent controversies over the 1990 Census have shown that demographic shifts are important to everyone--politicians, city planners, social workers, marketers, employers, recipients of entitlements and fixed incomes, and taxpayers--because dollars follow population changes.

On Wednesday, October 28th, the Reference Section of N.J.L.A. will present a half-day workshop on demographics entitled, "Numbers without Numbness." A distinguished group of speakers includes Professor James Hughes of the Rutgers Center for Urban Policy Research, Dr. Rosemary Scanlon of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and Edward Spar, former president of Market Statistics, Inc. These experts will share their knowledge of state, regional, and national demographic trends and sources. The workshop will be held at the Monmouth County Library facility at Manalapan from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

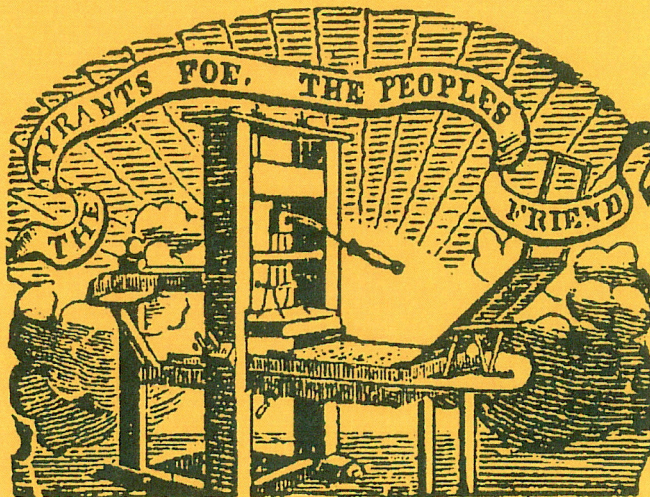
REGISTRATION FEE: NJLA members \$10.00
non-NJLA members \$15.00

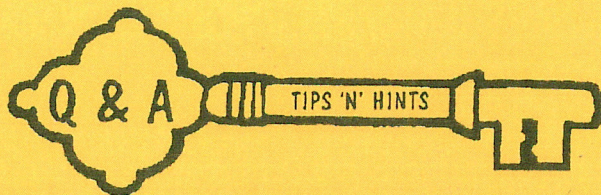
Please make checks payable to N.J.L.A.

Mail your reservation and check to: Henriann Robins, Springfield Public Library, 66 Mountain Avenue, Springfield, N.J. 07081

Please contact Catherine Sullivan at (201) 762-0230 for additional information.

*Roberta L. Tipton
Rutgers University*





This new irregular column invites your submissions on types or categories of reference questions, how you answer them, tools you use, problems you run into.

School Daze A Bibliographic Ramble

The economy has gone soft, families are on the move, and the patron wants to know "How do I find a rating of a school district?" It is right up there with the medical and legal questions. Parents' biggest concerns are what their choices are doing to their kids--and they want you let them know it is okay to move the family to Oshkosh.

Before you even begin the reference interview, while you are suavely strolling across the floor to the right reference book, start with caution. School districts all report their fact and figures differently, even within the context of the New Jersey "Report Card" system. (Some New Jersey districts report the SAT scores of all students taking the test, some the scores only of the college bound students!) The patron should be encouraged to look for what suits their particular child--an orchestra for the musical, a varied sports program for the athletic, and so on--not to fixate on numbers like SAT scores and teacher to student ratios. Walking the patron through a litany of questions may lead them to the one or two points of comparison that really matter to them, to their child(ren).

Are they looking within your county? Check with the lead library in your county for the School Report Cards (aka, How Does Your District Rate. This document has been differently formatted and titled in each of the three years it has appeared.) *If out of county, but within the state* contact the appropriate county library. The largest collection in each county received a full set of report cards for all districts within that county. Supplement this with the QED volume on New Jersey schools, which allows you to give the patron the specific names or individual schools (public, private, and parochial). Show them how to use the administrators' key to identify the supervisors and program officials they may wish to speak to: special education, gifted and talented, music athletic director, etc. The district's designated affirmative action officer can tell them about the ethnicity of the student body and the number of foreign languages spoken in the homes of the students. The special education supervisor can address district enrollment, mainstreamed students versus self contained classes, and how many students the community is placing out of district. The gifted and talented coordinator should be asked if the district takes part in the ROGATE program, if classes are pullout or in-class enrichment, and what the identification standards are. Encourage them to call a school they contemplate enrolling their children in and get the name of the PTA/PTO president. This is the person from whom they can get a real nuts and bolts feel for the community, the class size, program structure, success or failure of the budget and any referendums.

Within New Jersey, right now, they may also wish to inquire as to whether the community is a "foundation" or a "transition" district, for state funding of the former will continue, for the latter may be phased out and this will impact on property tax bills. Finally, are there any current or proposed regionalization studies? Regionalization has been the buzzword of the last two years, a number of communities are taking it under consideration, and your patron may not want to buy into one town, only to find her children will go to school in another town altogether in three years!

Use the 1990 Census data! If the patron seems interested, you can give them information on the economic and educational profile of the community they are moving to. Length of residency data will tell them if they are moving to a town that is highly migratory, a place where a "new kid" might fit in more easily. Take a look, too, at the age range of the population. A community with a good sized pre-school population has a mandate to support education.

Finally, though, for any district in or out of state the best service you can render is to help your patrons refine their personal profile of what it is their family, their children need. Try to lead them through some of these considerations:

what kind of community do you want to live in?

Diverse? Homogeneous? Rural, suburban, urban?

what level schooling? Elementary: do you mind if your elementary children go to different schools (sending districts) or do you want them in the same school? High school: let's get the guidance supervisor's name and phone and see what recent graduates have gone on to do.

is this a temporary or permanent move? If your patron expects to return to New Jersey in a few years, their high school students should look to state graduation requirements.

are you currently in a large or small district? Do you mind your child taking the bus, using public transportation; would you drive the child to school?

do you have a special needs? Do your children need a gifted and talented program, special education services, an excellent music or art program, an athletic program strong enough to lead to a scholarship...

do you need before or after school care programs?

Comparative school data is so idiosyncratic, so unreliable that your best role in this reference situation is not to answer, point blank, but to connect, to encourage, and to query. Remember, the higher the event ranks in the Life Change Unit scale, the less sure any of us can be of "answering" it.

Sara Weissman has had her children in three different districts in two countries. On staff at the Morris County Library, she also serves as planning consultant to two local school districts.

POINT OF REFERENCE is a publication of the
N.J.L.A. Reference Section.
4 West LaFayette Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08608

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